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ABSTRACT

Discussed is the necessity of providing teachers with a sound support base for instructional decisions to provide quality individualized instructional programing for handicapped students. Prerequisites to a support base (including administrative support, definition of roles, and open communication) are outlined, and some of the requirements of an instructional planning/appraisal system (such as being usable without extensive training and capable of serving most instructional programs) are listed. (SB)

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Providing Teachers a Support Base for Instructional Decisions

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Historically, instructional planning has been represented in public education by the brief and casually written lesson plan, the infrequently used anecdotal record, and the archives oriented cummulative record. As teacher trainers, we have espoused the need for detailed planning and have offered our students endless suggestions on procedures. The net effect has been that the practical realities of the classroom teachers role have precluded effective instructional planning. Teachers, for the most part, have had to initiate, evaluate, and revise student programs within the restraints of overloaded schedules, minimal planning resources or direction, and limited administrative support. Additionally, it has been the teacher on whom pressure has been applied if, in fact, planning became a concern locally. All too frequently concern emerged due to the lack of planning, not in support of planning as a generalized practice.

The lack of a support base for instructional planning is probably directly related to the lack of urgency for planning as perceived by administrators and the complacency on the part of parents to accept instructional decisions as offered by school personnel.

The Special Education community, inspite of the circumstances, has been recently successful in establishing a priority for planning. The emphasis given to perscriptive teaching and, in general, individualized instruction for the handicapped attests to this success.

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While it would be presumptuous to suggest that all Special Education teaching personnel are skilled in planning or that all Special Education programs currently maintain viable instructional plans on all handicapped students, one could argue that individualized planning for all handicapped students is attainable given systematic procedures and a commitment on the part of school personnel to such planning. The strength of this argument depends greatly on being able to exercise control over resources and programming. Until recently special educators maintained such control. The movement toward mainstreaming has the effect of reducing the amount of control exercised by special educators over instructional decisions effecting handicapped students. Regardless of the social and philosophical arguments one may offer in favor of mainstreaming, it is apparent that the problem of instructional planning for handicapped children has been complicated by the trend. We are finding two particular features of mainstreaming emerging as major variables to be dealt with in instructional planning, i.e. the shift of primary instructional responsibility for the handicapped child from special education personnel to the regular class teacher and the expanded involvement of persons in the handicapped child's instructional program. These factors add substantially to the ask of planning for an individual child.

A closer look at what is occurring in our field today reveals a broader set of conditions which must be considered when initiating instructional program planning for the handicapped.

CONDITIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

. . . SHIFT OCCURRING AWAY FROM SPECIAL CLASSES

. . . OPEN RECORD SYSTEMS

. . . CAUTIOUS RECORDING OF TEST DATA

. . . ACCOUNTABILITY FOR TEACHING EFFECTIVENESS

. . . DUE PROCESS - PLACEMENT

. . . LEGISLATION DICTATING PROGRAM ALTERNATIVES

. . . PARENTS/PARENT ADVOCATES

. . . BROADENED PARTICIPATION IN INSTRUCTION

. . . HIGH VISIBILITY OF SPECIAL INSTRUCTORS

. . . LOW VISIBILITY OF EXCEPTIONAL CHILD

. . . RESPONSIVENESS OF ADMINISTRATION

. . . CREATION OF ROLES/DEMAND FOR PERSONNEL

. . . TEACHER RESPONSIBLE FOR SPECIFIC SKILL AREAS

. . . REQUIRED TO SHOW EVIDENCE OF

--INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS

--PLACEMENT DECISIONS

--INSTRUCTIONAL SUCCESS

--PLACEMENT SUCCESS

. . . CONTINUOUS PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Probably the most significant event to occur in the history of education for the handicapped has been the passage of Public Law 94-142. In addition to the financial and protective dimensions of the law is a requirement directly related to instructional planning.

" . . . assurance of the maintenance
of an individualized program for
all handicapped children."

The consequences of not maintaining instructional plans on handicapped children has now become such that the sufficient urgency now exists for administrators to provide the necessary support base for instructional planning.

Four years ago it was my fortunate experience to become involved in the development of an Instructional Based Appraisal System. The intent of the project was to create a systematic approach to instructional planning which provided for continuous appraisal of pupil performance and directly related appraisal to instruction. Participation in that project from conceptualization to development to field testing to marketing has convinced me that instructional planning, while a teacher centered activity, requires a support base. Merely mandating the process is insufficient.

PREREQUISITE TO A SUPPORT BASE

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

--Implied concern for quality instruction

--Overt priority for planning

--Investment in conditions and resources

--Cummulative orientation, i.e. long term

DEFINITION OF ROLES

--Clarification of responsibilities

--Acceptance of roles

--Understanding of roles

OPEN COMMUNICATION

--Among all instructional personnel

--Formal structure, but informally applied

--Inclusive of extended family, i.e. resource personnel, parents, etc.

ATTITUDE OF INSTRUCTIONAL DEVELOPER

--Focus on pupil needs

--Design instruction

--Try out instruction

--Review results

--Alter instruction

If we are to capitalize fully on the current trend in our push for quality instructional programming for handicapped children and youth, then we must work toward the establishment of a sound support base for our instructional decisions. If we merely require teachers to create and implement individual plans, we risk creating an impossible set of conditions for the teacher and in the process, jeopardizing the educational future of handicapped children. The attention of administrators must be attracted to the task of planning.

To suggest that general administrative awareness and support is sufficient is obviously simplistic. But without such a base, success is questionable. Additional process related requirements include the following.

REQUIREMENTS OF AN INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING/APPRAISAL SYSTEM

. . . ACCOMODATE ACADEMIC, SOCIAL, AND PSYCHO MOTOR CURRICULUM

. . . USABLE WITHOUT EXTENSIVE TRAINING, i.e. ATTAINABLE

. . . RETRIEVABLE, i.e. INSTRUCTIONALLY RELEVANT INFORMATION

. . . BE CUMMULATIVE

. . . ALLOW FOR FULL INSTRUCTIONAL PARTICIPATION

. . . BENEFICIAL WITHOUT DETAILED USE

. . . STANDARD FORMAT

. . . SUSTAINABLE

. . . SERVE MOST INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS

. . . RESPONSIVE TO ADMINISTRATORS' QUESTIONS

. . . PROGRESS BASED

. . . ALLOW FOR INSTRUCTIONAL DECISIONS

. . . PROVIDE FOR MODIFICATIONS WITHOUT ALTERING BASIC SYSTEM,

i.e., REDUCTION

SUPPORT DATA

ADD-ONS

. . . MUST BE SYSTEMATIC AND ALLOW FOR ENTRY AT ANY TIME BY TEACHER OR STUDENT

My assignment on the panel this morning has been to establish the concept of a support base for instructional planning. Most of my views on this topic have resulted from our experience in developing the Instructional Based Appraisal System (IBAS)*. I won't take time to present the system, but I do want to comment on one portion of it as an example of instructional planning.

Summary:

As teachers, you have ultimate responsibility for instructional planning, but not sole responsibility. Let's advocate for a support base as well as for the priority of instructional planning.

*It will be discussed in the presentation but not described in the paper due to space limitation. The Reader is referred to the Instructional Based Appraisal System, 1976, Edmark Associates, 13241 Northup Way, Bellevue, Washington 98005.